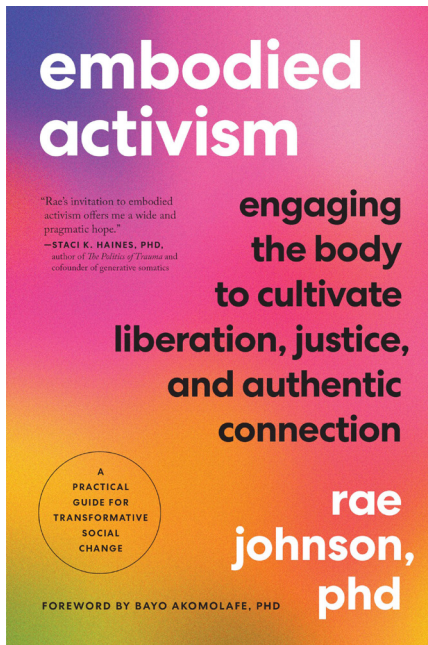


# Embodied Activisms Explored by Scholar-Teacher-Activists

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## EMBODIED ACTIVISMS EXPLORED BY SCHOLAR-TEACHER-ACTIVISTS

**T**raditionally, activism has been recognized through individuals marching and protesting in public spaces. However, contemporary embodied activism is not confined to this singular representation. On the contrary, after completing the reading of this book, it becomes evident that embodied activism defies such singular representation entirely:

[W]e have defined embodied activism as identity-based participatory advocacy directly utilizing the body as a site of power from which to resist structural and systemic inequities and limitations. This definition is more comprehensive than

earlier inclusions of embodied experience within definitions of activism, and grounds the need for social justice movements to emanate from embodied experience. Embodied activists, therefore, are those who perform their advocacies utilizing their bodies as a tool for change, often as highly visible acts of civil disobedience or small-to-large-scale protest movements (Newsom e Lengel, 2022: 230).

This work compiles case studies that meticulously contextualize historical developments, examining how activists' strategies have evolved over time in both offline and online settings. The studies explore the dynamics between public and private spheres and oscillate between vocal/visible and silent/invisible approaches. These strategies sometimes embody confrontational and assertive energies, while at other times, they embrace celebratory and leisurely tones. Each form of activism possesses its distinct characteristics.

Examining the specific cases under study reveals notable differences, such as between the environmental protesters in Istanbul, Turkey, who faced police aggression for peacefully opposing the deforestation and demolition of Taksim Gezi Park, and the participants in leisure-oriented demonstrations (such as jams, yoga meetups, dance parties, and mass bike rides). The latter activities typically entail a lower risk for participants and often provide an element of enjoyment.

It could be said that the guiding principle of the book is to examine how these internalized experiences shape the body's constitution, influencing actions aimed at enhancing individual and collective agency. This process involves challenging and transforming the operational norms of institutions that perpetuate dominant social structures and norms. Within this framework, embodied activism seeks to blur the boundaries between personal and political realms, while steadfastly upholding justice as a guiding principle. Additionally, it calls into question what qualifies as science. Personal narratives are recognized as a crucial component of legitimate, serious, and impactful knowledge production, particularly in academia. This perspective embraces the chaotic nature of human subjectivity, which deviates significantly from the mathematical logic of the hard sciences.

The topics covered are extensive. At one moment, we witness the impact of a controversial memorial to the victims of the German occupation, commemorating the German invasion of Hungary, which has summoned activists. Many of these activists, belonging to the Jewish community and part of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, protested that the monument sought to absolve the Hungarian state of its collaboration with Nazism. In the next moment, we are introduced to the *Handmaid's Tale* protesters, who, by invoking Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel, gather women dressed in red robes to silently defend abortion rights during critical

political moments. Within the realm of women's rights, the book also delves into the stigma surrounding public breastfeeding and analyzes the impact of organizations that promote gatherings to normalize and encourage this practice. One of the main objectives of "lactivism" is to break the lingering prejudice that conflates sexuality with motherhood.

The text also discusses more underground approaches that are explicit and impactful. As a queer artist, Ron Athey takes the exposure of his marginalized body to the extreme by exploring themes of pain and suffering. Athey's performances often involve acts of self-mutilation and endurance, challenging audiences to confront the boundaries of art, identity, and human experience. His work is heavily influenced by his personal history, including his upbringing in a Pentecostal family, his experiences as a gay man, and his struggles with HIV and addiction. In his underground performances, viewers are forced to confront a brutal reality that cannot be denied or escaped. Regarding the LGBTQIA+ struggle, the book explores less aggressive approaches for the bodies of marginalized people. It includes a reflection on how vows of silence have been positively received in educational settings. This form of non-violent demonstration creates a safe environment for students who frequently endure bullying.

This book is highly relevant to contemporary issues. It highlights the latest activist strategies for promoting change, such as through the widespread use of smartphone cameras that have popularized and accelerated the confrontation with shocking realities of discrimination. This is evident in the case of police accountability activism, commonly known as cop-watching, exemplified by the paradigmatic case of George Floyd. Here, the smartphone camera emerges as a powerful political tool, capable of bridging the gap between local and global contexts, particularly in instances where violence or abuse of police power is imminent.

This diversity underscores the understanding that the body is shaped by accumulated habits and perceptions, which can become so deeply embedded that they necessitate expulsion, manifesting in various distinctive ways. Noteworthy conceptual notions include "hypervisible embodied activism", "invisible embodied activism", "emphatically embodied activism", and "authenticated embodied activism". These serve as theoretical tools that facilitate productive analysis of activist dynamics based on the degree of exposure of the bodies involved.

The structure of the book is divided into three sections, all marked by an intersectional, intergenerational, transnational, transgender, cross-disciplinary, and intertextual perspective. The first section consists of five essays that establish the theoretical underpinnings of embodied activism by introducing concepts and analyzing practical cases already mentioned in this text. In the second section, three essays explore the interconnections

between collective memory and embodied activism. This thought-provoking set on witnessing and remembering reflects on how memory becomes ingrained in the body and influences identity. These cases are examined from the perspective of the impact of trauma on the (re)construction of collective memory. Here, it is worth highlighting one of the essays, which remains highly relevant today, as it revisits the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day in 2018 in Palestine. This commemoration recalls the brutal massacres that preceded the day, as well as ongoing efforts to condemn the policies of colonization, ethnic cleansing, and the occupation and repression associated with the establishment of the State of Israel — a struggle that continues to this day. Currently, we are witnessing an authentic genocide that cannot be erased from our global memory.

Lastly, the concluding section features four essays that delve into the significance of resistance through silence, examining cases where silence conveys a more powerful message than any outcry. Within this anthology of essays, readers gain insight into how activism evolves and is presented with pathways to analyze its intricate and multifaceted dimensions. The collection delves into the dynamics and negotiations between dissenters from the established order and conformists, identifying potentials and limitations. It examines the complex interplays between minorities and majorities, marginalized and privileged groups, and oppressed and oppressors, addressing issues related to environment, class, ethnicity, and gender.

It could be said that this book is itself an embodied activism. It is a provocative and fearless publication. Here, the activists are also the researchers who use their bodies to empower and legitimate marginalized voices and approaches in academia. In this sense, these scholar-teacher-activists are seen as performative modalities of activism that fight forms of power and domination.